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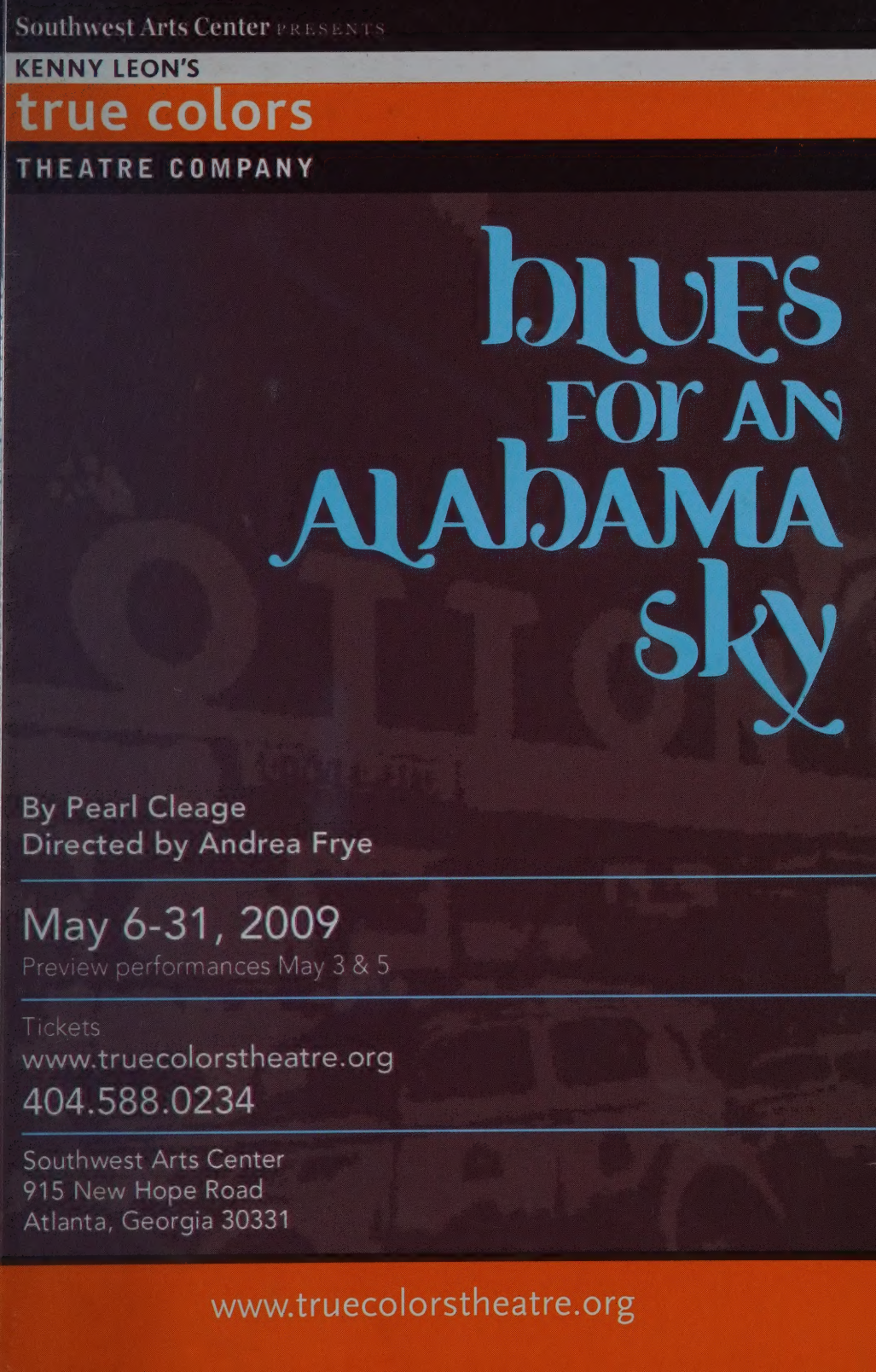

BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY

By Pearl Cleage
Directed by Andrea Frye

May 6-31, 2009
Preview performances May 3 & 5

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Southwest Arts Center presents

KENNY LEON'S
true colors
THEATRE COMPANY

Kenny Leon
Artistic Director

Wendy Riggs
Managing Director

Blues for an Alabama Sky

Written by **Pearl Cleage**

Directed by **Andrea Frye**

Set Design by
Dunsi Dai

Lighting Design by
Ken Yunker

Sound Design by
Chris Bartelski

Production Manager
Lisa Watson

Stage Manager
***David Blackwell**

Costume Design by
Shilla Benning

Blues for an Alabama Sky is presented by arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc in New York.

Commissioned by and World Premiered at Alliance Theatre Company, Atlanta, Georgia
Kenny Leon, Artistic Director Edith Love, Managing Director

With support from the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund's Resident Theatre Institute.

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JAZZ 919
GEORGIA POWER A SOUTHERN COMPANY

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welcome

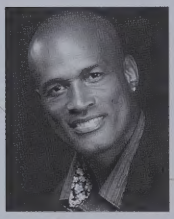
Hello and welcome to another exciting production for True Colors here at the Southwest Arts Center theatre. We could not be more pleased to present Atlanta's own New York Times best-selling author Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky*.

Blues for an Alabama Sky is beautiful comic-drama juggling the tragic landscape of poverty and the redeeming quality of hope. When the creative euphoria of the Harlem Renaissance meets the harsh reality of the Great Depression an environment is created that feels familiar, paralleling issues that we are dealing with today.

We need to thank Andrea Frye for her insightful artistic vision when directing this piece and for being a member of the True Colors family. We also would like to thank the True Colors and Southwest Arts Center staffs for bringing another amazing production to life in our neighborhood. And finally, we would like to thank the audiences who supported us during our inaugural production at this theatre and continue to support us and letting us make Southwest Atlanta our home.

So thank you for joining us. We hope that you are enjoying this season at True Colors as much as we are.

Peace and love,



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Managing Director

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Cast (in alphabetical order)

* **Cynthia D. Barker**	Delia
* **Benjamin Brown**	Leland
* **Jasmine Guy**	Angel
Joel Ishman	Sam
* **Eric Ware**	Guy

Production Team

Lisa L. Watson	Production Manager
* **David Blackwell**	Stage Manager
Shane Wallace	Assistant Stage Manager
John Hardy	Wardrobe Master
Valerie Benning	Prop Master
Paul Thompson	Technical Director
LA Williams	Directing Intern
Xavier Lampkin	Production Assistant
Andrea Gooden	Production Assistant
Kenyth Thomason	Master Carpenter
Andre Allen	Master Electrician
Kat Parhan	Scenic Artist
Tia Dennis	Scenic Design Assistant
Teresa Dennis	Scenic Design Assistant
Kenneth Murray	Sound Op

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ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION 1913

ssdc The Director is a member of the *Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc.*, an independent national labor union.

tcg Theatre Communications Group

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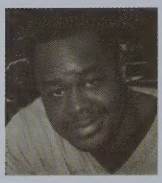
PEARL CLEAGE ***(Playwright)*** is an Atlanta-based writer whose plays include *Flyin' West, A Song for Coretta* and *Bourbon at the Border. Blues for An Alabama Sky* was originally commissioned by The Alliance Theatre and directed by Kenny Leon during his tenure there as Artistic Director. Her six novels include What Looks Like Crazy On An Ordinary Day, Some Things I Never Thought I'd Do, and Seen It All And Done the Rest. She frequently collaborates with her husband, writer Zaron Burnett, Jr., with whom she co-authored the poem, We Speak Your Names: A Celebration for Oprah Winfrey's "Legends Weekend," in 2005. Currently at work on her seventh novel, Till You Hear From Me, due from Ballantine/One World in the summer of 2010, she is also the author of a new play, *The Nacirema Society Requests the Honor of Your Presence at a Celebration of Their First One Hundred Years*, commissioned by The Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Pearl is the mother of one daughter, Deignan, and the proud grandmother of Michael, Chloe and Bailey. As a thirty year resident of Southwest Atlanta, this production gives Pearl special pleasure not only because of her long time association with True Colors Theatre Company but because she is an enthusiastic supporter of The Southwest Arts Center.

CYNTHIA D. BARKER (Delia) is incredibly grateful to be returning to True Colors Theatre Company where she was a member of the dynamic ensemble of *Black Nativity*. She received her M.F.A. from the Hilberry Classical Repertory Company in 2008. Previous Credits Include: *Hamlet, Compleat Female Stage Beauty, Amadeus, Sideman* and *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide*. Cynthia is humbly reminded that "A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men." Thank you Lord for the gift, for your favor and the opportunity to share time, space and the stage with such wonderful people. Daddy, I'm here because of you. Family and friends, thank you for holding me up. To God be the Glory!

BENJAMIN BROWN ***(Leland)*** is a proud native son of Atlanta. His most recent credits include: *The Color of Water,* American Place Theatre*; Blood,*Edinburgh Fringe Festival*; Gunplay, Naked Angels/Actors Gang; Fool For Love,* The Philadelphia Theatre Co; *My Children! My Africa!* ,People's Light And Theatre Co. on the regional and international stage. Television credits include: "Safari Tracks", Fox; "Omba Mokomba", Disney Channel; "The Unit", CBS; "N.C.I.S.", CBS; "House Of Payne", TBS, "The Suite Life", Disney Channel; "E.R." , NBC "Without A Trace", CBS; "In Justice", ABC; "General Hospital", ABC; The West Wing, NBC. Film: *Little Fish, Strange Pond; The Family That Preys; I Still Know What You Did Last Summer; Introducing, Dorothy Dandridge.* Upcoming projects include: (DVD) *Tafari's Folktales From Africa*; *Tafari's ABC's*; *Tafari's Magic Counting Drum*. (Film) *Mississippi Dammed* - Fall 09. Many thanks to cast and crew, True Colors Staff, Kenny Leon, Andrea Frye, and Pearl Cleage. The proud father of a five year old, he has profound gratitude for his family. He thanks them for their unconditional support and love throughout his life and career. For more information please check out my webpage www.tafarianimalfolktales.com

JASMINE GUY ***(Angel)*** was recently seen on Atlanta stage in the True Colors Theatre Company's hit production of *Miss Evers' Boys* and the True Colors and V-Day production of *Swimming Upstream*. Last summer she enjoyed her directorial debut in the critically acclaimed production of *For Colored Girls Who Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Enuff* at Atlanta's 14th Street Playhouse. She is also featured in Howard Zinn's *The People Speak* along with greats John Legend, Viggo Mortensen, Danny Glover and many others. The Showtime series *Dead Like Me* is now a movie featuring Jasmine due out this fall. Her Broadway credits include *Leader of the Pack, Grease, Beehive, The Wiz* and Bob Fosse's *Chicago* as Velma Kelly. Jasmine co-starred in Spike Lee's *School Daze*, Eddie Murphy's *Harlem Nights*, the Jamaican indie film *Kla$h*, and most recently *Tru Loved*, a coming-of-age film opening in cities in October. In the early 90's Jasmine starred in "A Different World" as Whitley

Gilbert, for which she won 6 consecutive NAACP Image Awards. She also debuted her self-titled album during this time. Jasmine authored the book Evolution of a Revolutionary about the life of Afeni Shakur, mother of Tupac. She currently tours the country with a one-woman piece *Raisin Cane about the Harlem Renaissance*. Feel free to check out her official website: jasmineguyonline.com.



JOEL ISHMAN ***(Sam)*** is pleased to make his True Colors Theatre Company debut. He started his professional career as a senior at Emerson School for the Visual and Performing Arts is Gary, IN. He was a member of the Fear and Love Acting Troupe that toured the Chicago region raising awareness about the dangers of date rape. He then attended the University of Northern Iowa, majored in Theater Performance, and as a freshman was the first African-American to have a lead role in a main stage production. His other theatrical performances include *The Wiz, Oliver, Grease, Into the Woods, Hair, The Three Penny Opera, Sex Drugs Rock & Roll,* and *To Kill A Mockingbird,* and Childrens Garden Theaters *Back to the Beanstalk*. He has appeared in films such as *Stomp the Yard, Daddy's Little Girls*, and a straight to DVD film *Pick Up Lines*. His television credits include MTV's "Yo Mamma", Touchstone Pictures' "October Road", and GSU's "SubUrban Underground". "I would like to thank my wife, Erin, my pastor Dr. Mason Betha, and our wonderful director Andrea Frye for believing in me. Its just God doing His thang".

ERIC WARE ***(Guy)*** began his career in Atlanta, in both theatre and television, playing recurring roles in *In the Heat of the Night* and *I'll Fly Away*. In New York, he starred in Lincoln Center's Broadway production of *Mule Bone*, by Langston Hughes and Zora Neal Hurston. He later won a Woodie Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Dramatic Role at the St. Louis Black Repertory Theatre for roles in *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Guy) and *Spirit North*. Incidentally, he also played Leland in *Blues for an Alabama Sky* at Seattle's A Contemporary Theatre. Shakespearean experience includes *Othello, Cymbeline*, and *Titus Andronicus* at the Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern and *Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night* at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. He most recently played Macon in *Gee's Bend* at The Denver Center Theatre Company and Carter in *Hallelujah Street Blues* at Atlanta's Horizon Theatre. Other television credits include "Paris Trout" opposite Dennis Hopper, "The Vernon Johns Story" as Martin Luther King, Jr opposite James Earl Jones, and principal roles in "JAG", "ER", "7th Heaven" and "Six Feet Under". Also a writer, Ware's script, *Sellout*, was a semifinalist in the 2002 Hollywood Black Film Festival and he's written two novels, The Hollywood Colored and The Down Low Diaries, which was a 2007 Lambda Literary Award Nominee. He has a B.S. in Speech and Theatre from Troy University.

ANDREA FRYE ***(Director)*** is a Spelman alum and an Atlanta favorite. Some of her most popular Atlanta productions include *Flyin' West* for True Colors Theatre and *Jar the Floor* with the Alliance Theatre. She has directed across the country with Arizona Theatre Company, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Jomandi Productions, Portland Center Stage and many others. As a powerful actress, Ms. Frye's performances have garnered her critical praise. Her work is so well respected she received special permission from author Edward Albee to be the first African American woman ever to portray the lead role in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe* for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Until Hurricane Katrina, Andrea was an Artist In-Residence at Dillard University in New Orleans.

CHRIS BARTELSKI ***(Sound Designer)*** is very happy to be working with True Colors for whom he recently designed *Miss Evers' Boys*, *Black Nativity*, *The Amen Corner, Stick Fly*, *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men* and *Resurrection*. Chris is the resident Sound Designer at Theatrical Outfit (*Pure*

Confidence, It's A Wonderful Life, Southern Comforts, Mahalia & The Immigrant) Horizon Theatre (*9 Parts of Desire, The Santaland Diaries, Water Coolers, The Missionary Position, The Bluest Eye, The Thing About Men & In Darfur*) Aurora (*Dial M for Murder, Noises Off, Christmas Canteen, Glorious! & Lucky Stiff*) Theatre in the Square (*Rabbit Hole, The Belle of Amherst, Little Dog Laughed, Pecos Bill and The Ghost Stampede, Miss Witherspoon & I Have Before Me a Remarkable Document Given To Me By a Young Lady From Rwanda*) and Jewish Theatre of the South (*Comparing Books & Hard Love*). Did you know that Chris is available for all of your recording needs, visit his recording studio's website at www.thelodgeatlanta.com.

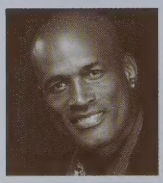
SHILLA BENNING ***(Costume Designer)*** has been an integral part of the Atlanta Theatre Community for over 15 years. Ms. Benning's work has been seen at the Horizon Theatre Company (*The Negro Dance Lesson , The Flaming Guns of the Purple Sage, Hambone, Homebody Kabul, The Drawer Boy, and In Darfur)*, with Jomandi Productions (*Julius Caesar, Servant of the People, Trick the Devil, The Wizard of Hip, Black Nativity and A'int Misbehaven*), with True Colors Theatre Company (*Steel Magnolias, Stick Fly, The Amen Corner, Black Nativity, and Miss Evers' Boys*), and The Alliance Theatre Company's *Shakespeare's R&J*. Ms. Benning also designed the world premiere of Anoka Censure's *Flying over Purgatory* . She has worked extensively with Ballethnic Dance Company, The Atlanta Opera and the National Black Arts Festival. She has designed costumes for The Grammy Award winning Sounds of Blackness, Andre 3000 of the Five Time Platinum Hip-Hop Sensations OutKast, Teen Hip-Hop Phenomenon Bow Wow and Grammy award winning Hip-Hop Princess Ciara. Ms. Benning was part of the Emmy award winning costume department for "Dancing with the Stars", she served as assistant costume designer on the feature film *One Missed Call,* uniform coordinator for *Madea Goes To Jail,* and she currently serves as Costume Designer for "Tyler Perry's House of Payne".

DAVID BLACKWELL ***(Stage Manager)*** is literally a Broadway baby, becoming the youngest stage manager on Broadway at age sixteen! His work on Broadway and National tours include: *Raisin, Dream Girls, Sweet Charity, The Wiz, Timbuktu, Showboat, Sophisticated Ladies, Beauty and the Beast.* In 1988 Debbie Allen hired him to join the show "A Different World", he quickly moved into his television career as key stage manager, winning directing assignments for Six seasons. "Fresh Prince of Bel Air", "Sister Sister", "Lincs", "Last Comic Standing" followed. Currently David and Ms. Allen are shooting a new series staring Jasmine Guy, here in Atlanta, to air next season "My Parents, My Sister & Me". After thirty-plus years of creative and personal accomplishments, he continues to work in all facets of entertainment, having two projects in development for television and theatre. David brings to every project he approaches, the gifts of a culturally rich childhood, and the invaluable professional and ethical lessons learned from his phenomenal parents, the beloved Mr. Charles and Mrs. Frances Butler Blackwell.

DUNSI DAI ***(Scenic designer)*** (USA Local 829). He has designed both Off-Broadway as well as at regional theatres across the country. The scope of his design works include: straight drama, musical, opera, experimental production, children's theatre, corporative theatre, and special event. His favorite designs including *Rita's Resource* (Pan Asian Rep, Nyc), *Once Upon The Mattress* (Brook Hollow Players, Ny), *Carmen* (Trenton State Theatre, Nj), *Desert Song* (Hampton Playhouse, Nh), *West Side Story* (Struthers Library Theatre, Pa), *Marat/Sade* (Stanford Rep, Ca), *Big River* (Human Race Theatre, Oh), *Wit* (Repertory Theatre Of St. Louis), *River Niger* and *Waiting For Godot* (St. Louis Black Rep.), *Fiddler On The Roof* (Stages Of St. Louis), *Off The Map* (Tnt), *Hearts* and *From Door To Door* (The New Jewish Theatre), *Mame* and *1776* (Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre). His set design for Mustard Seed Theatre's *Remnant* received a Kevin Kline award in the category of Out Standing Scene Design. Dunsi is an associate professor of scene design at Webster University. He has a web site at http://www.webster.edu/~daidu. Dunsi wants to thanks Andrea for the opportunity to work on the True Colors' show.

LISA L. WATSON ***(Production Manager)*** received her undergraduate degree from Clark Atlanta University and went on to pursue graduate studies at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in Scenic Design. During her stint in NY she worked many companies including The Negro Ensemble Company, New Federal Theatre, Crossroads, Diane McIntrye, and The Billie Holiday. Her job titles ranged from production manager to stage manager to scenic designer to carpenter. Returning to Atlanta, she joined Jomandi Productions as Production Manager, a position she held for 10 years. She has taught Stage Craft and Theatre Arts Management at Clark Atlanta University. In 2003, after taking a small sabbatical in a bookstore, Lisa began her tenure as Production Manager at True Colors.

KEN YUNKER ***(Lighting Designer)*** began his professional career at the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Assistant to Lighting Designer Duane Schuler. With more than 500 designs for opera, ballet and theatre to his credit, he is currently the Resident Lighting Designer for the The Atlanta Opera and The Sarasota Opera Association. Locally, you have seen his work at the Tony award winning Alliance Theatre, Theatrical Outfit, Theatre in the Square, True Colors, Atlanta Lyric, Ballethnic Dance Company, Gwinnett Ballet and Rotaru Ballet, as well as Six Flags Over Georgia. National credits include works in Salt Lake City, Chicago, Las Vegas, Bermuda, New Orleans, Tulsa, Mobile, Fort Worth, Augusta, Knoxville, Eugene, Augusta, Phoenix, Tucson, Tallahassee, Raleigh and Cleveland. In Atlanta he has been nominated for the Atlanta Abbey Awards "Artist of the Year" and has been featured in *Creative Loafing*,"Best of Atlanta."



KENNY LEON ***(Artistic Director)*** is a sought after director of stage and film. His Broadway work includes the 2004 revival of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, which featured Sean Combs, Audra McDonald and Phylicia Rashad. The show earned two Tony Awards and a Drama Desk nomination for Outstanding Director. His production of *A Raisin in the Sun* recorded the highest-grossing weekly box office sales for a drama in Broadway history. Other Broadway directorial credits include August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* (five Tony nominations) and *Radio Golf* (four Tony nominations). In Fall 2006, Kenny directed the Emmy-nominated film "A Raisin in the Sun", featuring the Broadway cast, which aired on ABC in 2008. Kenny's "Raisin" was the first broadcast film ever to be picked up by the Sundance Film Festival and premiered there (out of competition) on January 23, 2008. "A Raisin in the Sun" marks Mr. Leon's film directorial debut for which he has recently received a Director's Guild Award nomination. The film has also garnered an Emmy nomination, a Golden Globe nomination, and won the NAACP image award for Outstanding Television Movie, Mini-Series or Dramatic Special. Other international credits include Director of the World Premiere of Toni Morrison's opera, *Margaret Garner*, Artistic Director of the 10-play August Wilson *Century Cycle* at the Kennedy Center, Stage Director for Alicia Keys' *As I am* Worldwide Tour, and Director of *Flashdance: The Musical*. In 2008, Kenny worked with female survivors of Hurricane Katrina to debut *Swimming Upstream*, a new work in collaboration with Eve Ensler and V-Day.

Kenny has directed extensively around the country, including Chicago's Goodman Theatre, Boston's Huntington Theatre, Los Angeles' Center Theatre Group, New York's Public Theatre, Atlanta's Fox Theatre, and Oregon Shakespeare. As former Artistic Director of the Alliance Theatre, he produced the premieres of Disney's *Elaborate Lives: the Legend of Aida*, Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky* and Alfred Uhry's *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. A graduate and honorary Ph.D. of Clark Atlanta University. Kenny was named one of People Magazine's "50 Most Beautiful People" in 2004, awarded the "Martell Cognac Rise Above Award" in 2005, inducted into the Atlanta Tribune Hall of Fame, and named one of the "Top 20 Southerners to Watch" by the Financial Times of London Magazine. Kenny is Principal of KL Productions and a sought-after motivational and inspirational speaker with engagements at civic and arts associations, and corporations around the country.

TODD KREIDLER ***(Associate Artistic Director)*** is currently co-writing the book for the musical *Ivory Joe Cole* with Kelly Ward. His play *Stayers And Goers* was part of the Public Exposure reading series at Pittsburgh Public Theater last fall. He also wrote a stage adaptation of the film *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner*. As Dramaturg of August Wilson's *Gem Of The Ocean* on Broadway, Todd began working with Director Kenny Leon. That relationship continued as they shepherded August Wilson's final play, *Radio Golf*, through several regional theater productions, opening on Broadway last spring. Todd was the Associate Artistic Director of August Wilson's 20th Century at the Kennedy Center this spring and directed *Joe Turner's Come And Gone* for the festival. He began working with August Wilson during the 1999 world premiere of *King Hedley II* at Pittsburgh Public Theater and they worked together from then on, developing plays in theaters around the country: Huntington Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Goodman Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, CenterStage in Baltimore, McCarter Theatre Center and The Kennedy Center. He directed and developed August Wilson's one-man show *How I Learned What I Learned* and also worked with Mr. Wilson developing the screenplay adaptation of *Fences*. Todd spent three seasons at Pittsburgh Public Theater, where he directed *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night* for their Young Company. He is honored to be part of True Colors, a company founded on an embracing vision and commitment to the search for truth and clarity.

WENDY RIGGS ***(Managing Director)*** Formerly the Assistant General Manager for the Fox Theatre and the Founding Managing Director of the new Cobb Energy Centre, Riggs' experience stretches more than 25 years and includes serving as Managing Director for the Horn Performing Arts Center in Las Vegas, Project and Facilities Manager for the construction of two theatres at Walt Disney World, and Stage Manager roles ranging from the 1982 World's Fair to regional dinner theatres. She currently teaches in the Masters program of Arts Administration at SCAD-Atlanta and is a theatre consultant specializing in project management and performing arts centers' construction and operations. Wendy has an MFA in Theatre Management and Arts Administration from the University of Alabama/Alabama Shakespeare Festival and a BFA in Theatre Technology and Design from Auburn University. Wendy wants to thank her beautiful children, Amanda and Anna Kathryn for making her laugh every day.

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Notes from the Playwright

It is always dangerous to ask the playwright to say something about the play. Faced with the opportunity to explain, to illuminate, to place the work about to be seen in context, we tend to say too much, or too little. We are over protective of our characters, not trusting the audience to see them for who they are and judge them, or forgive them, accordingly. For me, *Blues for an Alabama Sky* presents a special challenge. Angel Allen is a charismatic flirt who is impossible to resist, but a dangerous friend who cannot be trusted to tell the story straight, no matter how much she promises that this time will be different. I find myself wanting to warn the colorful cast of characters who surround her to be careful, but then I remember that they know her at least as well as I do. Probably better ... What I do know is that this production brings together some of the most talented people I know, including artists I've worked with many times before, like Andrea Frye and Kenny Leon, and new collaborators like Jasmine Guy and the rest of our amazing cast with whom I hope to have the pleasure of working over and over again. A play is not a play without an audience so I thank you for completing our process by adding your presence to our circle. And now, as Doc would say, it's time to let the good times roll!

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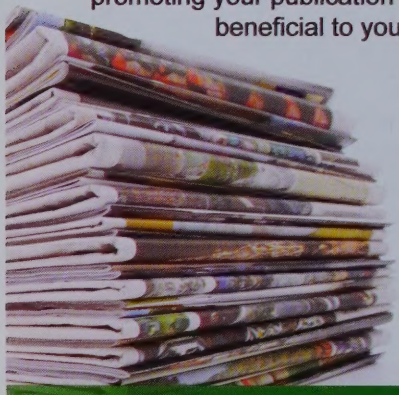

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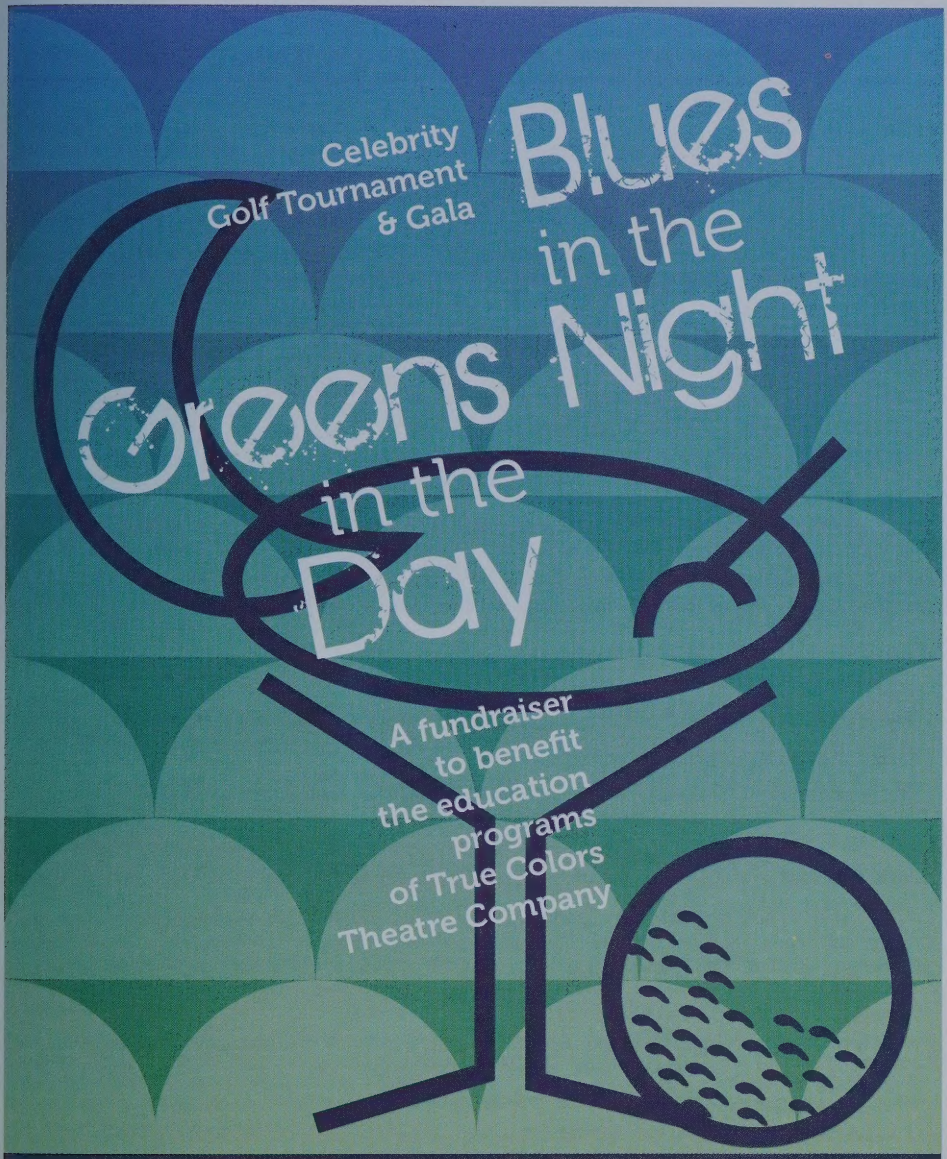

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